

IN THE CLAIMS: Please amend Claims 4 and 5 as shown below. All of the remaining claims are reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner.

4. (Three Times Amended) A method of ~~installing~~ providing an integral sealing gasket within a gasket receiving groove located in a bell connection of a joint of polyethylene pipe, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a rotatably driven mandrel having a substantially cylindrical end section corresponding to the internal diameter of a bell connection to be formed, the mandrel having an outer extent and an inner extent, the mandrel having a locating area for an elastomeric gasket on an external surface thereof, the locating area forming a region of decreased external diameter on the substantially cylindrical end section of the mandrel;

positioning an elastomeric gasket on the external surface of the mandrel within the region of decreased external diameter at the locating area thereof, the locating area being between the inner and outer extents of the mandrel;

forming a bell connection about the mandrel and suitably located gasket by extruding a heated melt profile made of polyethylene onto the mandrel beginning adjacent the inner extent of the mandrel and spirally winding the melt profile around the cylindrical end section of the mandrel and around the gasket such that adjacent windings of the melt profile make contact, passage of the spirally wound melt profile around the mandrel cylindrical inner extent, the region of decreased external diameter and mandrel cylindrical outer extent serving to form the gasket receiving groove into a desired shape;

cooling the bell connection thus formed to thereby maintain the desired shape of the gasket receiving groove;

removing the bell connection and gasket from the mandrel;

whereby a pre-stressed and pre-located integral gasket is provided within the bell connection which is securely retained within the gasket receiving groove, the bell connection being integrally formed about the gasket during manufacture.

5. (Three Times Amended) A method of ~~installing~~ providing an integral sealing gasket within a gasket receiving groove located in a bell connection of a joint of polyethylene pipe, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a rotatably driven mandrel having a substantially cylindrical end section corresponding to the internal diameter of a bell connection to be formed, the mandrel having an outer extent and an inner extent, the mandrel having a locating area for an elastomeric gasket on an external surface thereof, the locating area forming a region of decreased external diameter on the substantially cylindrical end section of the mandrel;

positioning an elastomeric gasket on the external surface of the mandrel within the region of decreased external diameter at the locating area thereof, the locating area being between the inner and outer extents of the mandrel;

forming a bell connection about the mandrel and suitably located gasket by extruding a heated melt profile made of polyethylene onto the mandrel beginning adjacent the inner extent of the mandrel and spirally winding the melt profile around the cylindrical end section of the mandrel and around the gasket such that adjacent windings of the melt profile make contact, passage of the spirally wound melt profile around the mandrel cylindrical inner extent, the region of decreased external diameter and mandrel cylindrical outer extent serving to form the gasket receiving groove into a desired shape;

terminating the extruding step while continuing to rotate the mandrel;

spraying cooling water over the bell end connection thus formed to thereby maintain the desired shape of the gasket receiving groove;

cutting a free end of the connection with a rotating knife; and

removing the bell end connection and integral gasket from the mandrel;

whereby a pre-stressed and pre-located integral gasket is provided within the bell connection which is securely retained within the gasket receiving groove, the bell connection being integrally formed about the gasket during manufacture.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the mandrel is heated to at least about 100 degrees C. before the melt profile is extruded.

8. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of subjecting the extruded melt profile to a weak mechanical loading by means of a rotating roll for intensifying a welding-together of the contacting melt profile windings.

9. (Once previously amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the rotating knife comprises a freely rotating circular blade which is pressed against the polyethylene of the bell end connection for cutting the free end of the connection.

10. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

removing the bell connection from the mandrel by blowing pressurized air between the mandrel and the connection while directly pushing the connection in a direction opposite the mandrel.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:

electrowelding the thus formed bell connection onto a generally cylindrical length of thermoplastic pipe.